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WATERFOWL INVENTORY SHOWS UPWARD TREND

The 1951 annual inventory of North America's migratory waterfowl, conducted from January 11 to 13 on the wintering grounds of the birds, revealed an upward trend sufficient to about offset the decline reported as the result of the 1950 inventory, Secretary of the Interior Oscar L. Chapman was advised today by Albert M. Day, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

"It appears now," said Director Day, "that the waterfowl populations have recovered from the decrease of a year ago and at this time stand at a level approximately equal to that of 1949."

An analysis of all the data turned in by the observers indicated that, by flyways, the Pacific Flyway had a wintering waterfowl population somewhat better than last year, particularly in geese. The Central Flyway was down slightly. The Mississippi Flyway showed a good recovery from 1950, while the Atlantic Flyway also indicated some improvement for the second consecutive year.

Of all the waterfowl seen in the inventoried areas, ducks comprised about 75 percent of the population; geese, 13 percent; coots, about 8 percent; and brant and swans, each less than 1 percent.

The Service's annual inventory, as in recent years, covered the more important known wintering grounds of game species in Alaska, Canada, United States, Mexico, and the West Indies. In addition to these sections, the survey included waterfowl areas in British Honduras, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. In the United States alone about 1,300 cooperating observers participated. More than 80 aircraft were used in the inspection of waterfowl wintering grounds and these planes flew more than 60,000 miles on survey flights.

The 1951 inventory, Director Day explained, was carried out under weather and water conditions generally more favorable for both aerial and ground counts than last year. This was especially true in the southern Mississippi Flyway States where icy conditions drove the ducks from normal haunts in dense hard-to-census areas to open water and fields where they were more easily seen. Another condition having a major influence on the distribution of waterfowl was the extensive drought in the southern portions of the Central Flyway, especially in northeastern Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. This tended to shift birds to coastal waters and principal reservoirs. Flood conditions in California and Nevada also had a major influence on the distribution of ducks. The normal concentrations there became more dispersed and hard to appraise.

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